



# LEA FAKA- TONGA

*A brief guide to reading and speaking  
the Tongan language*

XX  
PACIFIC LANGUAGE WEEKS  
XX

 Ministry for  
Pacific Peoples

# Reading and speaking

## Lea Faka-Tonga

### Vowels

The Tongan language is phonetic in nature. It is important that when you see diacritics attached to vowels (i.e., ‘a, ā, á), you are aware that the pronunciation and the meanings of the words can change. For example – kaka (to climb) or kākā (to cheat).

The fakau ‘a (‘) or glottal stop, always comes before a vowel. This changes the pronunciation of the vowel to a shorter, sharper sound. This also changes the meanings of the words. For example – anga (behaviour) and ‘anga (shark).

‘a, ‘e, ‘i, ‘o, ‘u as in the English language:  
**ah** ha, **elephant**, **inn**, **orange**, **oo**h la la

‘ā, ‘ē, ‘ī, ‘ō, ‘ū as in the English language:  
**amen**, **egg**, **easy**, **oh** no, **soup**

### Consonants

Lea Faka-Tonga has twelve konisonānite (consonants):

**f h k l m n ng p s t v** including the **[']** fakau‘a (glottal stop).

The pronunciation of the consonants is similar to English. However, the ‘ng’ is pronounced like the ‘nga’ sound in Te Reo Māori, or the ‘ng’ sound from the English word ‘song’.

The Tongan language also uses fakamamafa pau (stress marks).

The stress mark (**á, é, í, ó, ú**) seen at the end of a word tells us to make the vowel sound more exaggerated.

For example, when we say the word Tongá it tells us to emphasise the ‘a’ sound at the end.

### ‘Alafapeti Faka-Tonga *Tongan Alphabet*

#### **Aa**

Afi *Fire*

#### **Ee**

Efu *Dust*

#### **li**

Ipu *Cup*

#### **Oo**

Ono *Six*

#### **Uu**

Ukamea *Iron*

#### **Ff**

Fale *House*

#### **Hh**

Hala *Road*

#### **Kk**

Kahoa *Necklace*

#### **Ll**

Lele *Run*

#### **Mm**

Mango *Mango*

#### **Nn**

Niu *Coconut*

#### **Ng**

Ngatu *Tapa*

#### **Pp**

Peleti *Plate*

#### **Ss**

Sote *Shirt*

#### **Tt**

Tamai *Father*

#### **Vv**

Vaka *Canoe*

#### **[']** Fakau'a *Glottal stop*

'Umata *Rainbow*

# Lea Faka-Tonga 'e 'aonga kiata koe *Useful / Everyday words*

## Common Phrases

Mālō e lelei

*Greetings / Hello*

Mālō e lelei

*Greetings everyone*

'Alu ā

*Goodbye – to those who are leaving  
(only if it applies)*

Nofo ā

*Goodbye – to those who are staying  
/ Goodbye on the phone*

Fakamolemole / Kātaki

*Please*

Mālō 'aupito

*Thank you very much*

Fakamolemole

*Sorry*

Tulou / Kātaki fakamolemole

*Excuse me*

## Pleasantries

Ko hai ho hingoá?

*What is your name?*

Ko hoku hingoá ko \_\_\_\_\_

*My name is \_\_\_\_\_*

'Okú ke ha'u mei fē?

*Where are you from?*

Ko ho'ó ha'u mei fē?

Ko 'eku ha'u mei \_\_\_\_\_

*I am from \_\_\_\_\_*

'Okú ke ngāue 'i fē?

*Where do you work?*

'Oku ou ngāue 'i \_\_\_\_\_

*I work at \_\_\_\_\_*

## Lea Faka-Tonga 'e 'aonga kiata koe *Useful / Everyday words*

### In Conversation

'Okú ke fēfē hake?	<i>How are you (singular)?</i>
'Okú mo fēfē hake?	<i>How are you (dual)?</i>
'Oku mou fēfē hake?	<i>How are you (plural)?</i>
'Oku ou sai pē, mālō	<i>I am fine, thank you</i>
'Okú ke 'osi kai? Ta 'alu 'o kai	<i>Have you eaten? Let's go eat</i>
Fakamolemole 'i he tuai 'eku fetu'utaki atú	<i>Apologies for the delayed response...</i>
Hangē ko 'eku 'imeili atú	<i>As per my email...</i>
'Oku ou fiefia ke ta talanoa	<i>I'm happy to discuss</i>
Taimi fakamālohisino	It's gym time It's exercise/training time
Tā mai angé	Ring me
Fakafeta'i	Thanksgiving, Giving praise
'Oku lelei 'a e 'Otua	God is good!

## Lea Faka-Tonga 'e 'aonga kiata koe *Useful / Everyday words*

---

### People

Matāpule

*Talking Chief or Orator*

Faifekau / Taki Lotu

*Church Minister / Church Leader*

Tama

*Child*

Tamai

*Father*

Fa'ē

*Mother*

Tuofefine / Tokoua

*Sister / Sister (same gender)*

Tuonga'ane / Tokoua

*Brother / Brother (same gender)*

Kaungāme'a

*Friends*



